

INSPECTION REPORT

CARDINAL NEWMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Luton

LEA area: Luton

Unique reference number: 109699

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Jane Crow

Lead inspector: Dr Faysal Mikdadi

Dates of inspection: 1st - 5th November 2004

Inspection number: 268767

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of students: 11-19
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1419

School address: Warden Hill Road
Luton
Bedfordshire
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Telephone number: 01582 597125
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Andrew Morgan

Date of previous inspection: 26th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Cardinal Newman Catholic School is a large comprehensive voluntary aided mixed school in Luton with 1419 students on roll. In September 2004 the school gained Specialist Science College Status. A significant minority of students are of Irish origin. Many students are bussed in. The school is oversubscribed with a large sixth form. The majority of students' prior attainment is average. The percentage of students with special educational needs is 7.1, which is below the national average of 15.3. There is a variety of special educational needs including dyslexia, moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural needs. The percentage of students with statements of special educational needs is 1.3, which is below the national average of 2.4. The percentage of students who speak a language other than English at home is 4.3, which is slightly higher than the national average. The school has a designated co-ordinator looking after these students. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is 11.6, which is broadly in line with the national average of 15.6.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2447	Dr Faysal Mikdadi	Lead inspector	
14066	Gill Hoggard	Lay inspector	
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design, Sixth form art
34157	Jennifer Barker	Team inspector	
33498	Barry Bates	Team inspector	History
29742	Patricia Fyans	Team inspector	
34019	Karen Kerridge	Team inspector	Sixth form business studies
18178	Ian Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics, sixth form mathematics
23307	Neil McDonough	Team inspector	Citizenship
1355	Sandra Morgan	Team inspector	Design technology
3242	Dr Michael Newman	Team inspector	Science, sixth form biology
17808	Susan Orpin	Team inspector	Geography, sixth form geography
10817	George Rayner	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, sixth form information and communication technology
30072	Joseph Skivington	Team inspector	Music
31192	John Stewart	Team inspector	Physical education
31682	Anne-Marie Storey	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
33239	Susan Wright	Team inspector	English, sixth form English, sixth form drama

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school that provides a good education within a caring environment. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Students now achieve well. The headteacher, senior team and staff share the same vision for improvement. Governors know the school well and are keen to continue its improvement agenda. Curriculum provision is satisfactory, although the use of ICT in art and design, design technology and history does not comply fully with National Curriculum requirements. Accommodation has some shortcomings. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Students achieve well because of the good teaching and good assessment strategies
- Students with special educational needs are very well supported
- Provision is at least satisfactory and often better in all subjects although there are some shortcomings in design technology and art and design. Art and design, design technology and history do not fully comply with National Curriculum requirements to use ICT
- GCSE results are well above the national averages
- Students have very good attitudes to the school and they behave well
- In art and design, both the National Curriculum Teacher Assessments at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results are well below the national averages
- The headteacher, senior staff and most key persons show good leadership
- GCSE results in modern foreign languages are well below the national averages
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory with some shortcomings in areas such as English, mathematics, science, design technology, music and indoor physical education
- Students receive very good support and guidance
- Links with parents are very good

Improvements since the last inspection have been good especially in leadership, teaching and learning. There have also been improvements in celebrating cultural diversity and in meeting National Curriculum requirements in information and communication technology (ICT). There is still non-compliance in delivering ICT in art and design, design technology and history.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	B	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	B	D	D	

*Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 11.*

Students' achievement is good. By the end of Year 9 students' attainment is in line with the national averages in English, mathematics and science. Standards on entry are average. Teacher Assessment results are in line with the national averages in design technology, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, music and physical education. They are well below in art and design. The GCSE examination results are well above the national averages for those attaining five or more grades A*-C or five or more grades A*-G. The average GCSE point score is well above the national average which indicates that a high number of students attained the higher grades. These results

represent good achievement. Results in art and design as well as modern foreign languages were well below the national average in 2003. Standards seen during the inspection were in line with the national expectations for most subjects in Years 7 to 9 except for mathematics where they were above and for art and design where they were below. Current standards of work by students in Years 10 and 11 were also below national expectations in art and design. They were in line with national expectations in science, design technology, citizenship, ICT and music and above in English, mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and work-related learning. Overall, standards seen were in line with national expectations in Years 7 to 9 and above in Years 10 and 11.

Students' personal qualities are good with some very good features. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good. Behaviour is good. Relationships and attitudes are very good. Attendance is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Almost two out of every three lessons seen were good or better. As a result of the good teaching as well as the caring and warm ethos in the school, students respond well and consequently learn effectively and achieve well. The curriculum offered is satisfactory with a good range of enrichment opportunities. Students receive very good guidance and support and are often offered opportunities to take on responsibilities, which they do successfully. Links with parents are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher's leadership is good. Her vision for improving the school further is shared by senior staff, teachers, other staff as well as a good and supportive governing body. Leadership is very good in mathematics and physical education and good in science, citizenship, geography, music and work-related learning. It is satisfactory in English, design technology, history, ICT and modern foreign languages and unsatisfactory in art and design. Governors have not ensured full compliance with National Curriculum requirements because of the lack of ICT use in art and design, design technology and history. Overall leadership is good. Management is satisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students think highly of the school's provision. Parents are particularly appreciative of the way that the school takes care of their children. They are happy with information sent home as well as being appreciative of school home links. Parents are very supportive of the school. Students spoke highly of their school and of their teachers. Their only area of concern is that they have to wait outside the school when the buses drop them at school too early in the morning.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are to

- Enhance the provision of ICT across all subjects
- Raise attainment in art and design
- Improve the accommodation
- Respond to sixth form students' concerns about the facilities and social provision
- Improve the information and induction process for new students
- Extend the range of teaching strategies in the sixth form so as to allow improved development of the higher level thinking skills required in all subjects

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Ensure that the National Curriculum requirements for cross-curricular ICT are met in art and design, design technology and history

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form at Cardinal Newman School is satisfactory. The school provides a caring environment for its sixth form, encourages students to achieve well and makes considerable efforts to match the curriculum to the needs of individual students. The students behave well and enjoy being part of a unique school community. Students start with lower GCSE grades than is normal for A level studies. Achievement is satisfactory. Overall, teaching is overall satisfactory and meets the learning needs of most students, but some do not do as well as they could at the higher A and B grades. Some lessons are very teacher directed and students lack opportunities to develop their own ideas and the higher-order skills necessary to attain the higher grades. The sixth form is cost effective although the small group sizes for some subjects result in students having limited opportunities to take part in the wider discussions that help to promote better learning. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Students have good relationships with subject teachers and most make good progress
- Results in both AS and A2 examinations were lower than the national average in 2003. The results in 2004 have improved
- Standards of work seen during the inspection were above average in drama and theatre studies and geography. They were below average in art and design and well below average in information and communication technology (ICT)
- Students' work is assessed well; marking is rigorous and directed to meeting examination requirements
- Some students are not well prepared during Year 11 for studies in the sixth form

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all sixth form subjects were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good provision in English. Well-structured teaching and a positive response by students enable them to achieve well.
Mathematics	Provision is good. Students are taught well by committed and knowledgeable teachers.
Science	Good provision in biology. Knowledgeable teachers and very good student attitudes result in good learning.
Information and communication technology	Provision is unsatisfactory. Teaching places insufficient demands on the students and they are not well prepared to start the course.
Humanities	Good provision in geography. Students achieve well because of the good teaching and stimulating curriculum.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	This was not a focus area.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art is unsatisfactory. Teaching often lacks challenge and pace and leads to poor achievement. Where teaching matched students' needs, standards were higher. Provision in drama and theatre arts is very good. Teachers have high expectations and students are given appropriate support.

	The teaching in 'performance' is excellent.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	This was not a focus area.
Curriculum area	Evaluation
Business studies	Provision in business studies is satisfactory. Specialist teachers in the subject are now making good progress in raising standards.
Health and social care	This was not a focus area.
Physical education	This was not a focus area.
General education	This was not a focus area.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Advice, guidance and support for sixth form students are good. Many of the main school systems are successfully carried over into the sixth form. The overwhelming majority of students are appreciative of the support that they are given by the subject teachers. Students' work is generally marked rigorously providing a good indication of likely examination performance. All students have examination targets based on an analysis of their GCSE results. Progress toward these targets is carefully monitored. English language, mathematics, business, drama & theatre studies and geography all give good advice to students to help them reach their academic targets. Art and design and ICT are not as effective in this respect and students make unsatisfactory progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Overall, leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. However, because of some temporary staffing difficulties, some aspects of leadership have become less effective. As a consequence of a small decline in student numbers, some classes are very small and the management of the timetable prevents groups being combined to make them larger. Social facilities and the provision of ICT facilities are limited and a cause of some concern, although the school has been able to make some improvements in the ICT equipment for the use of the sixth form. Facilities for private study are good and are well supervised.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being at the school and have confidence in the capability and expertise of the subject teachers. They feel that they receive good subject guidance although a very small number felt that they were not always pushed to achieve as well as they could. Students did not feel well informed about choices post-16 and felt that enrichment and other activities were somewhat limited. There was also a feeling that the school should do more to consult them about issues which concern them, although they also commented on the effectiveness of the new 'sixth form executive council' and how it has successfully managed to bring about some changes. Inspectors agree with these views.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

In 2003 the National Curriculum Test results, at the end of Year 9, were in line with the national averages in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The Teacher Assessment results were above the national average in physical education, in line with the national average in design technology, geography, history, and information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages and music. They were well below the national average in art and design. The proportion of students attaining five or more grades A*-C and five or more grades A*-G at GCSE, is well above the national averages. The average GCSE point score is well above the national average which indicates that there was a great number of students who attained the higher grades. These results represent good achievement overall particularly in Years 10 and 11. Standards seen during the inspection were in line with national expectations in all subjects in Years 7 to 9 except for mathematics where they were above and in art and design where they were below. In Years 10 and 11 standards seen were below national expectations in art and design, in line with national expectations in science, design technology, citizenship, ICT and music. Standards seen in the same years were above national expectations in English, mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and work related learning. Overall standards of work seen were in line with the national expectations. Achievement is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good overall
- GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above the national average
- Students do well particularly in Year 11
- GCSE results in art and design as well as in modern foreign languages were well below the national average in 2003
- Some weaknesses in ICT provision limit students' opportunities to develop their ICT skills

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9 students' attainment in the National Curriculum Tests in 2003 was in line with the national averages in English, mathematics and science. Teacher Assessment results were well below the national average in art and design. They were in line with the national averages in design technology, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages, music and physical education.
2. By the end of Year 11 students' GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national averages for the proportions of students attaining five or more grades A*-C and five or more A*-G. A large number of students attained the higher grades as indicated by the average point score which is well above the national average. In 2003 GCSE results were below the national average in English, design technology and well below in art and design and modern foreign languages. Results were above the national average in mathematics, geography and music and well above in history. They were in line with the national averages in science and physical education. Girls do significantly better than boys in GCSE design technology. In 2003 no students were entered for GCSE ICT.
3. The standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were below national expectations in art and design and in line with the national expectations in all other

subjects except mathematics, where they were above expectations. They were above the national expectations in mathematics.

4. The standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were below national expectations in art and design. They are in line with national expectations in science, design technology, citizenship, ICT and music. Standards were above national expectations in English, mathematics, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and work related-learning.
5. Literacy skills are average overall. Standards in literacy, in speaking and listening improve significantly as students go through the school. Students have a fairly good knowledge of subject specific vocabulary. Students can use dictionaries and they respond well to opportunities offered for extended writing. A major weakness in science is students' inability to produce extended writing. However, literacy provision is not consistently good across all subjects. It is at its best in geography, history and modern foreign languages.
6. Students' competency in numeracy work is average, except in science where they are above average. They are able to use a range of mathematical skills across subjects. Such skills include the use of charts, graphs and everyday number work.
7. The students' ability to use ICT is average overall. In ICT as a subject, students' standards are average. However, since ICT provision across subjects is unsatisfactory, students receive few opportunities to use computers. The result is that although they are competent in using computers, their skills are limited. There are some good opportunities to use computers in geography, music, physical education and for students with special educational needs.
8. Students' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics, science, citizenship and physical education. It is satisfactory in English, design technology, geography, history, ICT, modern foreign languages and music.
9. Students' achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 English, mathematics, science, citizenship, geography, history, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, vocational studies and work-related learning. It is satisfactory in design technology, and ICT.
10. The very good provision as well as the good individual support by teaching assistants, enables students with special educational needs to achieve well. Students are helped to achieve well academically as well as becoming all round good individuals. Students with English as an additional language as well as those identified as gifted and talented achieve as well as their peers. There is no difference in achievement between students of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.8 (33.3)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	35.9 (35.4)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.0 (33.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 249 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	66 (51)	52 (50)

Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	40.0 (35.3)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 235 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	85.9 (95.4)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	16.8 (27.8)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	201.5 (208.5))	258.2 (263.3)

There were 134 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

11. Students achieve satisfactorily in the sixth form. Inspectors looked in detail at eight of the subjects and courses taught in the school and sampled lessons in the other subjects. Standards seen were above average in English, geography and drama. They were average in mathematics, biology and business studies. Standards seen were below average in art and design and well below in ICT.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to work are very good in the main school. Behaviour is good in and around the school. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good attitudes resulting in confident, mature and thoughtful students
- Very good provision for social, moral and cultural development, although spiritual development is not as good
- Behaviour is good but students sometimes demonstrate boisterous or silly behaviour around the school

Commentary

12. Attendance is satisfactory and the school is proactive in following up absences and lateness. A large number of students come by bus and are sometimes late due to the buses running late but other than that students are very punctual to school and to lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.7	School data:	0.1
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year for which national figures are available.

13. Students show very positive attitudes to school: they are mature, sensible and thoughtful. Even new Year 7 students are surprisingly confident and forthcoming, happy to talk about their school and show their loyalty and commitment. Relationships between staff and students, and between students themselves are generally warm and respectful, and students almost all feel it is a safe and friendly place and there is at least one adult they can talk to. They believe this is a listening school, citing for example the school council,

special educational needs support and counselling group. Physical education and after-school activities also come in for praise.

14. Behaviour in and around the school is good, particularly in lessons where students listen and concentrate well. On odd occasions though students lack self-discipline - for example, when large numbers try to move simultaneously through the doors of the main block or up and down the stairs at break times.
15. Social and moral development is very strong, spiritual development is satisfactory. Cultural development is very good. Students have a good variety of opportunities to exercise responsibility: as school or year councillors, school monitors in Year 9, taking Duke of Edinburgh awards, in drama, music and sport. The school council is heavily involved in fundraising for charity - the actual recipient each year is chosen by democratic vote. In addition, Year 9 students support the university education of a student in Zambia. School rules are posted in many classrooms and understood by all. The school encourages older students to become involved with younger ones: for example, Year 11 prefects help new Year 7 students; and Year 11 drama groups prepared a short presentation to be shown to Year 8 students about a personal or social matter such as smoking and personal hygiene.
16. Assemblies and prayer moments in class make a positive contribution to spirituality – for example a recent thoughtfully scripted response to All Souls’ Day - but there are few opportunities to develop spirituality planned into the curriculum. Although a few good examples were seen, such as ensemble playing in music, opportunities are missed (for example in English or history) to explore students’ own responses or to develop awareness. This is a similar situation to that at the time of the last inspection.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of students on roll	No. of fixed period exclusions	No. of permanent exclusions
White – British	945	68	
White – Other	286	16	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	20	3	
Mixed – White and Black African	6		
Mixed – White and Asian	16		
Mixed – any other mixed background	22		
Asian or Asian British - Indian	9		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	7	1	
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	9		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	45	3	
Black or Black British – African	23		
Black or Black British – any other background	5		
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	5		
Parent/student preferred not to say	3		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded.

Sixth form

17. Behaviour is very good. Students' attitudes are often positive, but less so than in the main school. In general sixth form students behave very well in and around the school. Most have made a positive choice to stay on, citing the warm and caring nature of the school and the fact that they feel supported. In the main relationships are respectful and pleasant between staff and students, and between students themselves. There are a number of ways in which they can become involved with the school and gain responsibility. For example they help younger students as 'buddies' and some take the Certificate in Sports Leadership. In lessons they are usually disciplined and sensible, and interested in what they learn, though less able to discuss, argue and show conviction, often because they are not given the opportunity to develop higher-order intellectual skills. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.
18. A substantial minority reports that they found the transition from GCSE work to AS level quite a shock and felt unprepared for it. A number also say that they did not receive adequate guidance to help them choose the right course, reflecting the difficulties perhaps that some have adjusting to the increased demands of sixth form work. There was general agreement that some teachers have not adjusted to the fact that they are now young adults and should be treated as such. Although the new head of sixth form has set up an executive committee to manage aspects of student life in the sixth form, this has not really bedded in yet and a number of students are unhappy about the way in which their opinions are received. With some justification, they feel that issues have been in contention for quite a long period without resolution. For example they have asked for new computers, refurbished toilets and more common room space and private study space. The lack of opportunities for physical education was also a cause for concern, particularly among boys.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of the education provided is good. In almost two out of every three lessons seen during the inspection teaching and learning were good or better. Consequently all students, including those with special educational needs achieve well. Gifted and talented students are effectively supported and consequently they achieve equally well. Students are effectively assessed and they know what they need to do to improve their work. The targets set for each student are not specific to each subject. They tend to be an average of all subjects rather than being based on each individual student's standards in each specific subject which occasionally leads to confusion.

Teaching and learning

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Almost all the lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory or better and almost two thirds were good or better. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in the lower school. Assessment is good overall and students know what they need to do next in order to improve their work. Targets set can occasionally be confusing since they do not relate to each specific subject but are aggregates of overall performance and potential.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, particularly in Years 10 and 11
- Assessment is good
- Students respond well to their teachers and work hard
- Students with special educational needs are very well supported
- The targets set are not always specific to each subject

Commentary

19. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. This has been partly because of a whole-school focus on monitoring teaching and learning. The result has been considerable debate on what constitutes good teaching with some productive collaborative work. As a result, students' attitudes to learning are very good. They are keen to succeed and they behave well in the classroom. In the very few cases where teaching was less than satisfactory the reasons included lack of planning, insufficient understanding by the students of the lesson's intended learning outcomes and some silly behaviour by a very small number of students.
20. Teaching is almost always good in Years 10 and 11 whereas it was often satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The relative weaknesses in lower school teaching included less effective teaching methods. Teachers tend to have a very clear and well articulated idea of what each lesson is about in Years 10 and 11 whereas in the lower school there is a slightly laid back approach which lacks rigour. Older students are challenged consistently and given very good guidance on what to do to get the higher grades at GCSE. In Years 7 to 9 there is less focus on outcomes. The result is that older students experience consistently good teaching whereas younger students experience a mixture of good and satisfactory teaching. Most of the few unsatisfactory lessons occurred in Years 7 to 9.
21. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is satisfactory in English, science, art and design, design technology, geography, modern foreign languages and music. It is good in mathematics, citizenship, history, ICT and physical education. There is a clear and direct correlation between the quality of teaching and the students' learning and level of achievement in all these subjects.

22. In Years 10 and 11 teaching is satisfactory in science, art and design, design technology, geography and history. It is good in English, mathematics, citizenship, ICT, modern foreign languages, music, physical education and work-related learning. The main strength of the teaching in Years 10 and 11 is the fact that teachers are particularly good at teaching students what to do in order to gain the highest possible marks in the GCSE examinations. Consequently, GCSE results are well above the national averages.
23. The teaching of students with special educational needs is very good. Teachers and teaching assistants plan well for these students. Teaching assistants work well in a team and keep very good records of the students' progress. Regular assessments monitor progress and the results are used to plan future work and to set appropriate targets for each student. The result is that students with special educational needs do not only make good academic progress, but they are also well developed as individuals.
24. All students have targets for improvement and are routinely assessed to measure their progress. Overall, this is a good approach. Students know their targets and this provides a good motivation to learn. In some lessons, but not all, teachers refer to these and discuss the grade and level criteria needed to reach them. Good systems exist in English, mathematics and design technology. Marking of students' work, although often good is not consistent and does not necessarily refer to the targets.
25. Teachers have good information about students' attainment. This includes the target grades and previous grades based on national and other tests. It also includes information about different student groups, so that for example special educational needs and gifted and talented students are clearly identified. The usage of the information varies not only between departments but also within departments.
26. A current weakness in the system is that the target GCSE grades are based on an aggregate measure, so that one grade covers all the subjects. However, this is being changed to make it more subject specific.

Sixth form

27. Teaching is good overall. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in almost all the lessons seen in the sixth form with two thirds of the lessons seen being at least good. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, biology, business studies, drama and geography. It is satisfactory in art and design and ICT.
28. In Years 12 and 13, the targets are based on the use of the A Level Indicator System (ALIS). This produces a target grade which is often lower than the GCSE grade which the students have previously obtained. Where students do not have this possibility explained, it can create confusion and even de-motivate the students, as for example occurred in design technology at the beginning of Year 12. However further explanation by the teacher quickly rectified this problem. Assessment procedures are rigorous and work is generally well marked and provides good advice to students.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 176 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (2.5%)	33 (19%)	65 (37%)	63 (36%)	11 (6.5%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced. Opportunities for enrichment are good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weakness

- There is very good provision for students with special educational needs
- The provision of work-related curriculum options have improved opportunities for students in Years 10 and 11
- Accommodation problems have a negative impact on learning in some curriculum areas
- In some subjects there is insufficient use of ICT within the teaching programmes

Commentary

29. The curriculum caters satisfactorily for the different needs of particular groups of students and is broad and balanced. There is insufficient use of ICT in the main school in English and mathematics and statutory requirements are not met in art and design, design technology and history. In the sixth form this applies to English, mathematics and design technology. In modern foreign languages the timetable creates difficulties for the appropriate setting of students.
30. Students in Years 10 and 11 have access to a range of vocational courses. Work-related courses and applied GCSEs have proved popular and successful. Links have been established with a local college for NVQ courses for students with special educational needs. Students do not have sufficient opportunities to use computer aided design in design technology.
31. The time allocation for science is adequate. In Years 10 and 11 the time allocation is insufficient to allow all students to take English literature.
32. The school has good arrangements for collective worship. Provision for personal, social and health education is good with a regular programme organised via the tutorial system. A co-ordinator for citizenship has drawn together the contributions of the various subjects across the curriculum. There is a discrete course taught in Years 10 and 11. Provision for citizenship is good. Careers education is overseen by a member of the leadership team and is taught by specialist teachers. Personalised advice and guidance is provided by an advisor from the Connexions careers advisory service.
33. There is very good provision for students with special educational needs. Good links with feeder primary schools facilitate early identification of needs. A learning mentor works for six months in the primary school and for the first sixth months in Year 7 to ease transition with those students who would find transition difficult. The school has benefited from extra funding from the Aim High and Gifted and Talented initiatives. One person co-ordinates both schemes. There are clear criteria for those entering the programmes and the range of in-class and enrichment activities are proving successful in raising achievement.
34. Since the last inspection the school has developed the curriculum further. Account is taken of initiatives such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Literacy skills are being developed across the curriculum. Staff have incorporated in-service training on 'Thinking Skills' into the teaching activities. The school recognises the need to review the deployment of staff and the shape of the school day and timetable in order to provide the grouping and length of teaching lessons which suit the needs of all subjects and learners.
35. Students benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. Physical education activities are a strength. The application for the FA Charter Mark demonstrates the close links to other organisations. There are satisfactory musical opportunities. There are regular drama productions involving large numbers of students. The school offers a wide range of visits and fieldwork during the year. Students are actively involved in charity work and often

initiate fundraising events. A particular strength of the school is the promotion of awareness of other cultures and countries via themed weeks.

36. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The suite of classrooms for modern foreign languages is in good condition and supports learning well and some science laboratories have been refurbished well. The outside areas of the school support physical education well. However, there are several subjects where learning is limited by the quality of the accommodation. These include unsatisfactory accommodation for English, mathematics, design and technology, music and indoor physical education. English and history rooms are affected by dining arrangements which impact on the time available and organisation for lessons. The limited dining facilities in the school mean that students have to wait in long queues and access is very difficult. Around the school, the accommodation is dirty, often litter strewn and much is in need of decoration. Some classrooms are extremely cramped and in some parts of the school, access areas are very restricted causing potential overcrowding difficulties.
37. Suitably qualified teachers are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. They are knowledgeable about their subjects and there is a good balance of youth and experience. Non-teaching staff make an effective contribution to the life and work of the school. Technical support is good and has a positive impact on students' learning.
38. The provision of resources is satisfactory overall. ICT resources are not adequate however, due to the age and technical limitations of a high proportion of the school's computers. This has a particular impact in art and design technology, where the lack of specialised software and computer-based devices reduces achievement.

Sixth form

39. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory, broad and balanced. There is a wide variety of subjects offered including some vocational ones. Teachers are well matched to the curriculum offered. They are well placed to advise students on the next phase of their education. Resources are satisfactory. There are satisfactory opportunities for students to participate in enrichment activities although some sixth form students felt that they would like opportunities to take part in physical education. Accommodation suffers from the same shortcomings listed in the main school paragraph above.

Care, guidance and support

Very good provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of students in the main school provides them with very good support, advice and guidance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good arrangements exist for students entering the school
- The needs of students with personal or academic difficulties are met very well through very effective mentoring systems
- Very good relationships mean that students feel safe and secure and know that teachers are accessible and helpful
- Students' views are listened to in the main school
- The school environment is, generally, safe and healthy, but movement around the design technology block is restricted and dining arrangements are not satisfactory

Commentary

40. The school has very good systems to cater for students' welfare and care. Consequently, they enjoy the school and parents are almost entirely positive about the care provided for their children. The school has appropriate policies and procedures for child protection and

holds regular health and safety meetings, involving staff from areas of high risk. Students know that staff are accessible, helpful and compassionate when they need to share any difficulties. The "Remove" facility, learning mentors and the "Rainbow" group are very effective in providing support for students having personal difficulties that are affecting their achievement. Special support is provided for students who are deaf or visually impaired. Students are very positive about the impact of the rewards and assertive discipline systems.

41. Arrangements for the transfer of students from primary schools are seamless and are very much appreciated by parents, students and head teachers of feeder primary schools. Primary students visit the school for a taster day and are very well supported when they arrive into Year 7. Sixth form students provide very good support and escort them around school during their first week so that they feel confident and comfortable in their new surroundings. The transition mentor works very effectively with primary schools to ensure that the school has early awareness of problems. Students in Year 9 have booster classes after the national tests to help their transition into GCSE courses. Students consider that they get good careers guidance. All years have careers education lessons and home visits are available to give further guidance to vulnerable students.
42. The school is, generally, safe from hazards but a walkway from the design technology block to the main school is very narrow and makes movement very difficult. The school nurse is on site at all times and other staff are trained first aiders. Procedures to ensure Internet safety are clear and are carried out as effectively as possible. Arrangements for dining are not satisfactory as students eat their lunch in various crowded classrooms with high noise levels. The school has been active in trying to improve the situation but knows that it is not satisfactory as it stands. Students arriving early are supervised outside until the school doors are opened. Some students expressed concern about being outside when the buses arrive early.
43. Systems to identify students who are underachieving are very effective. The school, as a result of close monitoring, provides very good support to enable them to achieve well. Form tutors are provided with a matrix of assessment data on each student on a termly basis. Any concerns about individual students' achievement alerts pastoral staff and learning mentors, who provide very good support and monitor students' progress. Students are set targets for academic and personal development which are suitable to their needs. Parents and students contribute to the process when the school has closure days to review targets. Homework diaries are used effectively to ensure that there are clear lines of communication between the school and parents about progress.
44. The school council is becoming a very effective forum where students can air their views. They now feel as though they are being listened to and taken seriously. Students report, for example, that a recent survey about the colour of school trousers, which was identified as an issue and which had been perceived by students to have been ignored by the school, has now been resolved. Homework club procedures were, previously, very unpopular but have since been improved as a result of discussions. Students are still concerned, however, about hygiene and privacy in the toilets. It is apparent that the school does listen to its students' views.

Sixth form

45. Advice, guidance and support for sixth form students are good, overall. Many of the systems described above are carried into the sixth form, but students are not as positive about their effectiveness as students in the main school. They enjoy the school and are generally positive about relationships and the respect that they are shown by teachers.

They feel that the school is safe and caring and that they receive very good support from their subject teachers. The assertive discipline system is effective and students are positive about the system of gold and green slips, which add up to rewards and sanctions. They believe that the school council and sixth form executive committee provides a forum for them to express their views. However, they are not entirely positive that the school responds to their views effectively or that they are treated as young adults. Students are given helpful advice on what to study and the school offers an open evening to provide students and parents with advice on courses in the sixth form. However, over a third of students do not feel that they are made sufficiently aware of the demands of sixth form studies or of the suitability of courses related to individual career plans.

46. Sixth form tutors monitor the achievement of all students effectively, based on on-going assessments of their progress and achievement. Students feel that their work is assessed helpfully and that staff help them to study independently and carry out research. However, not all students feel as though the school places sufficient pressure on them to learn.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents and good links with other schools and colleges and the local community.

Main strengths

- Communication with parents is very strong
- Transition arrangements from Year 6 are very good
- There are good links with the local community

Commentary

47. The school has worked hard to improve its links with parents, and the school is heavily over-subscribed. In many ways procedures are exemplary. The process starts at open days where parents are given a guided tour, and followed by pre-admission meetings. These are carefully organised to include representatives of special educational needs staff, booksellers, the bus companies and clothing suppliers.
48. Parents and carers get a great deal of information about their children's progress - in two parents' meetings each year (which are well attended), an interim report and an annual report. Reports are detailed and informative but occasionally contain contradictions. The prospectus is bright, lively and professionally produced. The Governors' annual report has a number of omissions of statutory material such as absence rates, student destinations, and information about staff professional development. There are, in addition, lively well-produced newsletters and informative displays around the school.
49. Pastoral staff are very good at liaising with parents if there are any concerns over a student's work or attitude to it. Contact may be both formal - for example through letters home - or informal by telephone contact or face to face meetings held by the learning support department. In response parents are hugely supportive and appreciative: they say that they are well informed about progress, the staff are very approachable and the school consults them well.
50. The transition of students into Year 7 from their primary schools is managed very well and as a result new students very quickly find their feet. Staff go out to visit the main feeder primary schools to teach some classes and get to know students. The latter begin bridging units of work which are then completed in Year 7 in subjects such as mathematics, science and ICT. There is a transition learning mentor who helps to oversee the move, and very good liaison over students with special educational needs. On arrival Year 7 have the

school to themselves, apart from sixth formers, and thus have a chance to settle in. In addition, prefects from Year 11 help new students for a week by collecting and delivering them to their various classes at changeover. New students really appreciate the support they are given and quickly feel at home, thus maximising learning time.

51. Links with the community are good. The school is active in fundraising for a number of charities such as the Red Cross. The students' choice this year has been for a local children's hospice which they support both financially and by visiting for concerts and carol singing. A local Muslim women's group has come in to take some sessions which explore students' understanding of Islam. Links with the community through the church and related activities are also strong. Priests from the eight or nine parishes which serve the school come in to take Mass and also organise help with the preparation for confirmation. Representatives of the Luton Council of Churches have led retreat days, for example on the theme of forgiveness and confirm that the school is thoughtful, outward looking and very open to such events.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is well led by the headteacher who is supported by good leadership from other senior and middle leaders. There is a clear vision for future development. The headteacher has identified priorities and is putting into place procedures to move the school forward. Governance is good. The governing body helps to shape the vision of the school and understands its strengths and weaknesses. Overall management is satisfactory. It is good across subjects but there are inconsistencies with regard to consultation and the management of resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the future direction of the school and this is shared by governors and staff
- The headteacher has identified key priorities for action
- Inclusion practices are very good
- Leaders are good role models who inspire and motivate staff and students
- The use of self-evaluation and the action taken is inconsistent
- Consultation is not used effectively with regard to financial management

Commentary

52. The leadership of the headteacher is good. The headteacher has a shared vision for the school which is based on the school's catholic mission and Gospel values. The success of the application for science specialist status is part of the vision for raising achievement. The headteacher and governors have a clear sense of purpose in developing the curriculum to reflect the school's community.
53. The headteacher has carried out a review of the performance management system and, with the help of an external consultant a new system has been introduced for teaching staff which involves two lesson observations. The school observation committee co-ordinates all lesson observations and is currently reviewing the format for recording observations. Additional observations are carried out by heads of departments. There is a system of appraisal for staff other than teachers. This is used effectively for special educational needs teaching assistants but is inconsistently applied across the school. The headteacher has made significant changes to the senior leadership team so that now the heads of science and mathematics are members of the group. This has helped bring expertise into the senior team to help with the agenda for specialist school status. The headteacher sets part of the agenda for all heads of departments and heads of years' meetings which ensures that these focus on development priorities.
54. Leadership is very good in mathematics, in the special educational needs department and physical education. It is good in science, citizenship, geography, music and work related learning. There is

satisfactory leadership in English, design and technology, history, ICT and modern foreign languages. It is unsatisfactory in art and design.

55. Management is good in mathematics, science, design and technology, citizenship, geography, history, music, physical education and work related learning. It is satisfactory in English, ICT and modern foreign languages. It is unsatisfactory in art and design.
56. The governing body has a clear sense of purpose and direction and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It takes very seriously its mission to be inclusive and provide for all individuals. It is kept well informed by the headteacher. The governing body has seven meetings each year. At these meetings the headteacher presents a progress report. Governors are supportive to the headteacher but also challenging. There are four main committees which carry out monitoring roles of the school's work. Governors have had training on school performance data and have a good understanding of examination performance. Financial details are presented clearly which is helping governors to monitor the deficit situation. Departments carry out self-evaluation and feed development aspects into the school development plan. Governors are linked to departments and this allows for challenging questions about performance and provides the middle managers with a critical friend. This arrangement and self-evaluation are not as effective in art, design and technology and ICT across the curriculum because these curriculum areas fail to meet statutory requirements.
57. The school makes good use of data to monitor its performance. Results from national exams are carefully analysed. The analysis is used to assess the performance of the subject departments and also used to identify the performance of different groups of students, such as boys and girls and gifted and talented students.
58. Subject departments respond to the analysis in their annual subject reports, which include a section for future development. These subject evaluations are not fully effective as they tend to be rather vague and do not necessarily clearly identify the key conclusions nor provide the detail for how the department will respond to raise standards. Mathematics and science do further analyses and identify the performance of different classes and teachers. This is used to plan future allocations of classes to teachers. Although not yet widespread it is an approach which is helping to raise student attainment.
59. The school also produces a data book of information for all teachers which shows current progress and a target for each student. Although a good approach which gives teachers valuable information, the targets are not subject specific. Thus an individual student will have a single target grade which is applicable to all subjects being studied. This is a relatively unsophisticated approach, although the school has plans to identify separate targets for each subject.
60. Leadership contributes to the sense of belonging to the Cardinal Newman Community. The school's ethos is strengthened by the knowledge that the headteacher and all senior staff have of the students and their needs. Staff know students' families, parishes, partner schools and the wider community.
61. The school has a wealth of data and is now beginning to make use of the information provided from analysis to target areas for improvement. The senior leadership team reviews all value added data and plans a series of intervention strategies to target underachievement. Management of the financial position brought about by the deficit budget is a key priority for action. The headteacher has recognised the need to involve middle managers in consultation to tackle curriculum issues resulting from the financial situation. The headteacher is undertaking a review of the school development plan to ensure that it focuses on outcomes and that it is linked to the budget. The headteacher is creating leadership capacity through training and development of middle managers and through the line management structure of the link senior leadership team. The headteacher has used external consultants to help with the specialist school application, ICT and modern foreign languages.
62. The school council is co-ordinated by a link teacher who is providing good leadership for the council representatives and this is helping to give wider participation to students.

63. The school has experienced difficulties with recruitment and has had to rely on overseas trained teachers and on supply staff. The school has developed good links with Ireland and Jamaica and it now has a healthier staffing situation. The school started this academic year with a full complement of staff. However, there are still inconsistencies in some curriculum areas.
64. The school is firmly committed to the continuous professional development of all staff. Provision is directly linked to the school development plan and to the objectives that arise from performance management: its short-term and long-term impact on teaching and learning are closely monitored. Processes for the professional development of non-teaching staff are not as rigorously structured and evaluated. The school has a good induction programme for all new teaching staff. Initial teacher training is viewed as an important strategy for improving practice: it is monitored to ensure that both students and student teachers benefit from the experience.
65. The school budget is prepared by the bursar using the development areas outlined in the development plan. The school currently has a budget deficit and has made arrangements with the Local Education Authority for repayment over the next two years. Investment in ICT and departmental capitation have been reduced to meet the repayment target. The headteacher is in discussions with the Local Education Authority to extend this period.
66. Departments receive a capitation allowance based on a school formula. Heads of departments are then responsible for managing their budgets. Job descriptions include a responsibility heading for organising their department budget. However, middle leaders are not fully involved in consultation about department budgets. Currently, the school does not have a finance manual but the bursar is in the process of initiating this. Although middle leaders have had no specific training in best value principles, they mostly use a Local Education Authority supplier considered by the school to offer the best local value for consumables. All purchases are carried out using the school's purchasing procedure. The headteacher has identified training in financial management as a key issue for all managers responsible for budgets.

Sixth form

67. The school governors are currently concentrating on developing a fully inclusive sixth form curriculum school development plan which is specifically focused on raising achievement.
68. Governance is good. The governing body is committed to providing a range of courses to meet the needs of all students. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The school uses baseline data to set individual student targets and senior leaders devise intervention strategies as a result of external evaluations of student performance. There has been a decline in the number of students entering the sixth form because of preferences for courses at local colleges. This has resulted in a number of small sixth form groups which are not always cost effective. Teaching does not focus sufficiently on developing students' independent learning styles. There is limited social accommodation in the sixth form.
69. The approach to using data in Years 12 and 13 is good. The A Level Indicator System (ALIS) is used to produce target grades. However, not all students fully understand this system and they are not interpreting the target grade correctly.
70. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. However leadership is very good in mathematics and drama and good in biology, business studies and geography. It is satisfactory in English and unsatisfactory in art and design and ICT. Management is very good in drama and good in mathematics, biology, business studies and geography. It is satisfactory in English and ICT. Management is unsatisfactory in art and design.
71. Leadership quality has varied over the past few years. There is now a permanent head of sixth form. There have been numerous temporary arrangements which have seen an assistant headteacher taking responsibility for the sixth form. Due to another temporary arrangement the assistant headteacher is again responsible for the sixth form. This role is undertaken alongside senior leadership responsibilities. Because of the deficit situation, the school is considering reducing some sixth form teaching to reduce staffing costs. Attainment and a reduction in student numbers are key priorities to be tackled in the school development plan.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,906,400
Total expenditure	4,843,926
Expenditure per student	3,389

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	282,281
Balance carried forward to the next	62,474

OTHER SPECIFIED AREAS

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Not applicable	Above average
Achievement	Not applicable	Good
Teaching and learning	Not applicable	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths

- The school offers a good range of vocational courses and work-related experiences that are relevant and informative
- Work related GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 are popular and students achieve well
- Students learn well and respond positively to the good teaching

Commentary

Standards and achievement

72. Standards across the various courses are above average and students achieve well. For example, in health and social care and leisure and tourism students demonstrate good skills for independent research and investigation. They use computers confidently to access information and prepare documents. The courses offer very good use of communication technology. The opportunity to experience the working environment is a key element of these courses. Productive links with a local college give students the chance to use specialised equipment and provide a suitable addition to the in-school provision for the vocational engineering course. Placements in local health care centres have enhanced the achievements of students on the health and social care course. Students' good attitudes and behaviour contribute very positively to their achievement.

Teaching and learning

73. Vocational courses meet the needs of both higher and lower-attaining students well. Teachers have high expectations and most ensure that there are suitable opportunities for students to demonstrate higher levels of achievement through their coursework tasks. In most lessons teachers provide well for students differing learning needs. Good learning is

characterised by good teaching, where clearly expressed objectives, well-planned lessons and effective questioning ensure good use of the available time. Where students and their learning are not firmly managed, time is wasted and the quality of work and students' achievements are diminished.

Leadership and management

74. The school has actively sought to ensure that vocational courses are a relevant and valued part of the curriculum. This approach has been very successful, for example by recruiting both higher and lower-attaining students and in ensuring that the interests of both boys and girls are represented. As a result, the numbers of students choosing at least one of the vocational courses are very high. Care has been taken to plan appropriate pathways into and beyond the sixth form and the recent audit of provision has identified where these and other developments are likely in the future. Improving the management of work-related learning, by ensuring that the school can capitalise on the strengths and draw together the different strands from the pastoral programme, citizenship and work experience programmes, into a coherent whole, is a priority for the senior team. Work-related learning supports the students and the inclusive ethos of the school well.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved over the past few years
- Students are positive and keen to learn
- Good practice in the department is not shared
- The level of challenge is insufficient to ensure that all students fulfil their full potential
- The use of assessment in planning for all groups of students is insufficiently developed

Commentary

Examination results

75. Results in national tests have varied over the last five years. At the end of Year 9 in 2003, students reached average levels although there was good improvement in results in 2004, when results were increased. At GCSE, there was a dip in 2003, but there was a recovery in 2004 with an improvement in results. A minority of students perform well in English literature, which is taught as an option subject and they achieve above average levels. English results are weaker than mathematics and science.

Standards and achievement

76. Standards seen were satisfactory in Years 7 and 9 and better in Years 10 and 11. However there were differences in standards of students with similar abilities from class to class. This was the result of varying teaching styles and varying degrees of attention to assessment and planning. Standards in speaking and listening have improved as a result of students' more active involvement in lessons.
77. Achievement of students in lessons is variable. Most make satisfactory progress over time, maintaining average attainment in Years 7 to 9 and improving in Years 10 and 11. Student achievement, reflected in 2004 national tests shows improvement. Good relationships with teachers and between students, together with positive attitudes and keenness to learn, contribute to an atmosphere in which students can achieve. By how much depends on the quality of teaching and learning. The department is using a three-part lesson structure to support learning, is working on strategies to promote achievement and providing additional support in the form of booster classes. Marking and assessment lack consistency. At best marking is careful, detailed and helps students improve. At worst it is superficial and discouraging. The department is putting into place a rigorous system which involves students in assessing their work. This needs to be consistently applied and linked to whole

school use of assessment data so that all students have the best support to help them achieve their potential.

Teaching and learning

78. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teaching is strengthened by the use of targets for students at the end of Years 7 and 8 and by the recent introduction of thinking skills in Years 7 to 9. Students are well prepared for exams and know what is required of them. More able students, however, are not always challenged or given the opportunity to respond creatively. The department is aware of this and identifies those who are gifted and talented and has begun to plan for their needs. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations and vary demands to suit individuals. This practice needs to be used consistently by all members of the department. Resources and strategies that enable students with special educational needs to access the curriculum are not developed jointly with the special educational needs team. Some inclusive practice is in place, for example opportunities for paired discussion in lessons.

Leadership and management

79. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The new team leading the department has put into place systems to improve provision and raise standards. These have already had an impact on 2004 results. There are insufficient opportunities for creativity and the needs of every student are not consistently met. The lack of consistency, which was reported in the last inspection is beginning to be addressed. Whilst some teacher expectations are still too low, most expect and demand the best from students.
80. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The English area is shabby and the lunchtime arrangements detract from learning for some groups. ICT provision is inadequate, with only one electronic whiteboard and no regular access to computers. This hampers the progress of all students and particularly those learners with special educational needs.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

81. Provision overall is satisfactory, with strengths in some subjects. All curriculum areas have lists of key specialist vocabulary. Where there is best practice, this is developed through reading tasks where students highlight key words. This enables students to use specialist vocabulary confidently when discussing their work, for example in food and textiles. In geography, students have opportunities for extended writing and are given guidance in writing paragraphs to explain and describe in response to questions. Use of dictionaries as well as knowledge and understanding about grammar and tenses is a strength in modern foreign languages. History makes a good contribution to improving students' literacy skills. Opportunities to share good practice across departments will enable this to be developed further.

Drama

82. Drama is a strength and makes a good contribution to the life of the school. Teachers have high expectations and plan carefully to enable students to make progress. Assessment involves students and they co-operate together to improve their skills. It is increasingly popular as an option subject and students are well supported to achieve their best. The standard of teaching and learning seen was very good with some outstanding features.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good

Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since previous inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved through applying more consistent teaching and learning strategies
- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour make an important contribution to learning
- Teachers have a good command of the language they teach
- Teachers are hardworking and dedicated and work effectively as a team
- GCSE results have been well below the national average in recent years
- There is insufficient systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching to share good practice

Commentary

Examination results

83. Teacher Assessment results in 2003 were in line with the national average. GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national averages in both French and German. The 2004 results improved in both subjects.

Standards and achievement

84. Students currently in Years 7 to 9 reach standards that broadly reflect the national picture because of better schemes of work, resources and assessment practices. Most students make satisfactory progress and higher-attaining students generally make good progress. In Year 9 written work shows evidence of extended writing using past and future tenses.
85. Overall, standards in the current Year 11 are above average with a rising trend in the accelerated groups in Year 10. This represents an improvement since 2003 when standards were below, and well below national average in French and German respectively. In 2004, results improved remarkably in German and slightly in French representing better achievement by the students involved. Improvements in the schemes of work and changes in planning to meet examination criteria are having a positive impact on standards in both languages. Students, including those with special educational needs achieve well in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

86. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons teachers plan a sequence of activities which helps students to achieve challenging objectives. Instructions are clear and teachers constantly check students' understanding and target questions carefully. Students learn effectively in groups or in pairs but are not always given the opportunity to practise a good balance of writing, speaking, reading and listening during the lessons. They know their grades and National Curriculum Levels. Overall, teachers work hard to motivate students and provide purposeful lessons and, as a result, achievement is good. Grammar is clearly taught and now provides a solid basis for progress in Years 9 to 11. Planning provides a clear format for students' learning: learning objectives are shared with students at the beginning of lessons so that they understand what they are expected to achieve but not always checked in plenary sessions at the end so that they can assess how successful they have been. The attitudes from students are positive in the great majority of lessons where they respond well to the pace and to a variety of relevant activities. In some lessons, however, particularly in Year 7, classes were not fully engaged and concentration was poor as the tasks did not match their needs and interests. Homework is marked regularly and students are told how to improve.

Leadership and management

87. Leadership and management are satisfactory despite recent severe staffing difficulties and temporary arrangements. The department has a stable team of teachers who are committed to raising standards and the status of the department in order to improve the

number of students carrying on with a modern foreign language at GCSE and in the sixth form. Good use is made of the weekly departmental meeting to share ideas and pool resources but members of the team do not have enough opportunities to share good practice by observing each other. Although some good work is done with a few classes ICT is insufficiently used at present. Students have a major benefit in having regular contact with mother tongue speakers of the languages through teaching staff, foreign language assistants and some visits abroad. The department has made good progress since the last inspection in dealing with most of the key issues successfully.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department has developed very effective strategies for raising student attainment, particularly in Year 11, reflected in very good achievement at GCSE in 2004
- The management of students' behaviour is very effective in creating an atmosphere for learning
- Good assessment systems are used to set individual examination targets for students
- The quality of day to day marking is inconsistent

Commentary

Examination results

88. Students' standards when they start in Year 7 are average. Assessment results at the end of Year 9 have matched the national trend in improvement and, in 2003, were average in comparison with both national results and those of similar schools. The results in 2004 improved significantly and were above average. The difference between boys' and girls' results is similar to that seen nationally.
89. At the end of Year 11 in 2003, GCSE results were above the national average. There was a further improvement in 2004, particularly in the percentage of students achieving grades A* to C. The proportion of students achieving the highest A* or A grade was slightly lower than the national average.

Standards and achievement

90. Most students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of their positive attitudes to the work and the quality of teaching. Lessons often have stimulating starting activities which motivate the students, as for example occurred with a class of low-attaining Year 7 students who enthusiastically used 'number fans' to demonstrate answers to multiplication problems. High-attaining students in Year 9 showed good achievement and determination when they successfully solved linear simultaneous equations. Most teachers, are driving up standards by ensuring that each step of the work is carefully explained, understood and practised before moving on, so current standards are above average overall.

91. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are also above average. The work is exam focused, provides students with clear guidance on how to succeed and gives the students the confidence and knowledge to improve their results. In a Year 11 class a sequence of careful explanations showing students how to plot linear graphs, enabled borderline GCSE grade C / D students to complete successfully work of a grade C standard. This showed good achievement.

Teaching and learning

92. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In most classes lessons were well planned, often associated with a skilful use of interactive white boards and work was matched to the needs of the students. In high-attaining classes, the work was always well structured to meet exam requirements. Occasionally opportunities were missed to develop the advanced skills to prepare students fully to gain the highest A* and A grades. For example in a lesson on inequalities and regions, students were not given the opportunity to explore the methods of identifying the regions associated with inequalities involving two variables.
93. Students' behaviour is managed well so that all students can concentrate on learning. Good assessment systems result in a target grade being set for each student. In some classes, students know what the requirements are to get a particular grade or level, because they have copies of them in their books. There is also frequent reference during lessons to how students may gain extra marks in examinations. Students' progress was satisfactory but not as good in classes where teachers were not using these strategies consistently. Some marking is effective and helpful but does not give students sufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

94. Leadership is very good because it is successfully promoting a culture of improvement in the department. Management is good. The department reviews its performance and takes appropriate action. The very good strategies for raising exam performance are working. Some monitoring of teaching and learning takes place, and difficulties over recruitment of teachers have been managed as well as possible. Some inconsistencies remain in how individual staff implement department guidelines.
95. The department has produced good schemes of work, which fully incorporate ICT. However the whole-school issue of limited access to ICT facilities does restrict development. In spite of cramped accommodation the department's management of the classrooms and the strategies for improvement have resulted in increasing standards and progress since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

96. Competence in mathematics is satisfactory. In science it is above average. Students are able to use a range of mathematical skills across many subjects. They were using charts and graphs to plot information on nutrition in food technology and made good use of graphs including lines of best fit in science. Students were also making good use of their mathematical skills in business education where they were working on profit and loss accounts.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Positive student attitudes and good care lead to good achievement
- Teaching of students with special educational needs is good
- Links with other schools, including feeder primary schools, are very good
- There have been good changes in Year 7 curriculum and assessment, which have already led to improved standards

Commentary

Examination results

97. In 2003, Year 9 test results were in line with the national average and maintained the improvement that had taken place since the previous inspection, including the percentage of the higher grades (Levels 6 and 7). GCSE results also met expectations and were better than students' results in their other subjects. In 2004, results improved and reached 59 per cent A*-C. The value added was good, as indicated by statistics over ten years. There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' results.

Standards and achievement

98. Standards observed in work samples and lessons met expectations. In Year 7 they were better than average, reflecting improvement in attainment on entry and a more formative approach to prior learning. In general, numeracy is above average and students are given the opportunity to exercise it through graphical work and calculations. Literacy is satisfactory and good use is made of homework, particularly in short answer work. But the weakness in more extended writing noted in the previous inspection is still a feature. Investigative work has improved but there is still a tendency for standards to cluster in the middle ranges, so high marks in the skills categories are relatively rare even in the planning and observing skills, where they might be expected. Attitudes to work and co-operative skills are a strong feature and contribute to achievement. Overall achievement is good, particularly of students with special educational needs. Higher-attaining students achieve satisfactorily, but are insufficiently challenged.

Teaching and learning

99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but there are a number of strong features. Good relationships and care lead to better than expected learning for special educational needs students. Some individual teachers exemplify improvements in teaching methodology that the school aims for. These include clarity in defining learning objectives, use of techniques to help learning (such as concept maps) and the use of assessment to help students identify the next steps (formative assessment). These skills are not consistent across the department and there is insufficient work aimed at refining teacher understanding of concepts such as 'starter' and 'plenary'. Innovation in Year 7 (including the use of the 'bridging module' on energy) is causing improvement in this area. Work set is often the same across the whole set without distinction appropriate to the differing levels of attainment of different students. The higher attainers are insufficiently challenged. The use of revision guides as teaching tools has some advantages, such as unifying homework; and students look after the books well. But the pre-digested nature of revision and the shortness of answer required limits the work of higher-attaining students.

Leadership and management

100. The department is well led and managed. Curriculum and assessment are sound and beginning to improve in Year 7. It is a good feature that all students have access to double award science at GCSE. Summative assessment is good but the use of assessment to improve future work, as the department recognises, is insufficiently developed. Departmental leadership provides good role models, particularly in care and guidance of students. Training and induction of new teachers is good. The schemes of work are not readily documented and made available so that new teachers can access the theory behind different teaching strategies. Resources are satisfactory though there is room for much improvement in ICT resources as befits science college status, and improvement of the challenge of texts used for homework. Although laboratory refurbishment has had a good impact on the environment, arrangements for storage and movement of chemicals and equipment are unsatisfactory and could involve health and safety risks.
101. Since the last inspection, there has been progress in a large number of areas. These include very good primary links, improvement in achievement, in the teaching of special educational needs students and in the quality of teaching. Some features formative assessment and challenge for higher attainers are still not sufficiently rigorous, but overall, improvement has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Satisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are usually planned effectively to contribute to students' achievement, but often do not leave enough time for evaluation of learning
- Students' attitudes contribute well to their achievement
- The contribution of the subjects and resources to support ICT are unsatisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

102. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were average in 2003 and were at a similar level in 2004. The school did not enter students for external examinations in the subject in Years 10 and 11.

Standards and achievement

103. Most students enter the school with average standards in ICT. By Year 9 most achieve satisfactorily in maintaining their standards. This is continued in Years 10 and 11. Most students are able to use software competently as for example, when those in Year 9 collaborate well to create web pages and PowerPoint presentations. The good attitudes of students, who enjoy working with computers, contribute well to their achievement. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers.

Teaching and learning

104. Well-planned starter activities ensure that learning gets under way briskly in most lessons. While most lessons make good links to earlier learning, this does not always happen. In a few Year 7 lessons, for example, students do not build well enough on what they have learned in primary school. Teachers effectively encourage students to maintain their concentration and rate of work in a relaxed, but assertive manner. In many lessons, activities are planned to make sure that the achievement of students of different levels of attainment is well matched. Students know well what they have to achieve because teachers explain tasks clearly and give effective demonstrations, making good use of projectors and large screens. Good subject knowledge is used effectively, for example in helping students to improve their understanding of the need to create web pages and presentations to appeal to particular audiences. Most students have a good idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve because they receive good information from teachers about their progress, well related to National Curriculum and course criteria. The short duration of lessons sometimes results in activities not being as effective as intended. For example, teachers sometimes fail to check whether students have mastered what they have been taught before moving on to fresh activities and closing activities are often too short to provide an effective opportunity for students to discuss and reflect upon their work.

Leadership and management

105. The department is appropriately managed and leadership has secured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Although cross-curricular provision remains unsatisfactory, recent improvements to the taught curriculum now provide a core course for students in all years. Achievement currently remains satisfactory, in spite of good teaching and learning, because the improvements are too recent to have had an impact on standards in Years 9 and 11. Procedures for using assessment to help students to achieve are also better than at the last inspection. The school is aware of the need to improve the quality of its ICT resources and has a clear plan, related to its recently acquired specialist status, to do this.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

106. Students are now able to follow the full programme of study because the measurement aspect, which was not provided at the time of the last inspection, is now taught, mainly in science. However, cross-curricular provision is unsatisfactory, because several subjects provide insufficient opportunities to use computers. Three, design technology, art and history, fail to provide the minimum needed to meet the statutory requirement to provide opportunities to use computers for relevant activities in all National Curriculum subjects. Although the school has many computers, a very high proportion is too old to meet the needs of the curriculum adequately. Some subjects, for example design technology, do not possess sufficient good quality specialised programs and equipment. Some subjects, especially geography music and physical education, and the special needs department, do succeed in providing good opportunities to use computers. However, there is no clear overall plan to show which subjects provide planned opportunities in each ICT aspect, or what role they play in assessing ICT standards. When students do use computers, their standards generally reach expected levels in the areas in which they are working.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in Year 11 are above average and students achieve well in Years 10 and 11. They are very interested and highly motivated to do well
- Students benefit from good teaching by a mainly well-qualified team, although some teaching is less consistent in Years 7 to 9
- Students are generally too reliant on the teacher so that although they achieve above average results by the time they reach Year 11, they are less well prepared for the more independent skills required for successful study in the sixth form
- Assessment and target setting are good and help students improve their work well

- The curriculum is interesting and stimulating and students are helped to make good use of their numeracy and ICT skills

Commentary

Examination results

107. The 2003 Teacher Assessment results were in line with the national average. The school results at GCSE in 2003 were above average and there has generally been improvement over recent years, although they declined slightly in 2004.

Standards and achievement

108. The standards of students' work at the end of Year 9 seen during the inspection were as expected for their age and the achievements of all students are satisfactory. The standards of work by Year 11 are above average and their achievements are good. Students are very highly motivated and very interested in their lessons, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where the number of students choosing to study the subject is increasing. All students including those with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and achieve well in Years 10 and 11.

Teaching and learning

109. Teaching and learning are generally good, but there is more variation in teaching in Years 7 to 9. Teachers usually provide clear explanations and very structured lessons, so that students' knowledge and understanding are extended well. Relationships are often very good and in most lessons students are managed well. However, in a few lessons, the level of challenge for some students was too low, and the teacher was too restrictive. Despite students' enthusiasm for the subject, teaching methods sometimes encourage them to be over dependent on the teacher with the result that they rely on the teacher's questions and are reluctant to ask questions for themselves. In the better lessons, the teacher succeeded in encouraging students to think more independently. For example, in a Year 10 lesson about glaciation, the teacher used practical activities, such as screwing up pieces of paper to illustrate how snow compacts to become ice in a glacier. The use of photographs also provided students with information and stimulated their curiosity to ask questions for themselves. The use of questions and encouragement helped students to gain confidence and not rely so heavily on the teacher.
110. Teachers mark and assess students' work regularly and generally well. Targets and information about what is needed are well used, so students have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Although assessments are consistent in Years 10 and 11, some are less reliable in Years 7 to 9.

Leadership and management

111. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is very clear vision for the development of the subject and a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The subject has improved well since the last inspection, so students' achievement continues to improve. Fieldwork makes a very good contribution in Years 10 and 11, but is insufficiently developed in Years 7 to 9. ICT is used well for research, for the presentation of work and in the analysis of data. Although resources are satisfactory and map work and visual material are used well, there are missed opportunities because the range of resources and the opportunities to use ICT within geography classrooms are too limited.

History

Provision in history is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Good
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff commitment fosters excellent relationships with the students
- Well-structured programmes of study and rigorous use of assessment feedback enable students to make good progress
- Staff commitment to the provision of visits and field work is a strength
- There are insufficient opportunities to use ICT as an integral part of the teaching programmes
- Teachers do not do enough to improve student motivation and independent working

Commentary

Examination results

112. In 2003, the Teacher Assessments at the end of Year 9 were around the national average. The GCSE results improved on the well above 2003 results but were below the school's target grades for this cohort.

Standards and achievement

113. On entry, standards are average although there are differences in the type of history taught in the feeder schools. Progress is satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 9. Students have been able to develop the skills to evaluate sources of evidence. They are guided to write extended essays. Students, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 and 9. This work is developed in Years 10 and 11 building on prior skills and learning, for example students working in groups were able to assess in considerable depth the reliability and usefulness of primary sources on Jack the Ripper. Current work in Year 11 suggests that the results next summer will see further improvement in standards. These students achieve well.

Teaching and learning

114. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge which is used to provide well-resourced lessons with a variety of activities. Insufficient use is made of starters and plenaries to motivate the students. Attitudes to learning are always at least satisfactory and at times good. Teachers do not sufficiently build in more challenge to the students and use question and answer sessions to extend the students' thinking. A programme of visits and fieldwork enhance the classroom learning. The use of feedback sheets is a strength. These are aligned to National Curriculum levels and give students clear advice about how to improve their work. There is only one computer in the department and there is insufficient access to computers. As a result the national requirement for the use of ICT in history are not met.

Leadership and management

115. Management of the team is good. Team members work together to produce schemes of work and learning resources and activities. The team plan reflects the school's priorities,

notably that of raising attainment. Leadership is satisfactory. There are shortcomings that have not been fully addressed, for example the recruitment of students in Years 10 and 11 as well as in the sixth form, accommodation and ICT.

116. Accommodation consists of four specialist rooms which are reasonably well equipped. Two rooms are used as dining spaces and there is no adequate working area for the team. The team makes a valuable contribution to citizenship and literacy. Course provision across the 11 to 18 age range offers a good range of national and international history and as such contributes well to students' cultural development.
117. Improvement since the last inspection has been good most notably in the improvement of GCSE and sixth form results and in the use of assessment to aid student learning. There has been a decline in student take up of examination courses.

TECHNOLOGY

Design technology

Provision in design and technology is satisfactory. The department offers GCSE courses in resistant materials, graphics, textiles, food technology and a vocational GCSE in engineering which will be examined for the first time in 2005.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory	
Management	Good	
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in textiles and food technology and standards are above average
- The quality of teaching and learning is too variable, although it is good in food technology and textiles
- Some issues raised in the last report relating to the use of ICT and the quality of accommodation and resources have not improved sufficiently and are limiting students' progress
- Teachers assess students' class and written work very thoroughly so that students know what they have to do to improve

Commentary

Examination results

118. The teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that students' attainment is average and girls are doing better than boys. Students' GCSE results have shown gradual improvement over the past five years. Whilst in 2003 results showed some decline and were below the national average the most recent results improved. Girls' results were significantly better than those of boys by a wider margin than that seen nationally. Most students were entered for the subject, however, a below average proportion gained the highest grades. Results between subjects vary with students doing best in food technology and textiles.

Standards and achievement

119. Students' work indicates that their level of attainment when they enter the school is below average. The current work seen in Year 9 varies considerably between subject areas. It is above average in food and textiles and below average in resistant materials, where students have limited practical skills and knowledge of materials and processes. Throughout Years 7 to 9 students do not use computers sufficiently to enhance the presentation of their work or for research. Students with special educational needs do well because assignments are structured carefully with short activities which are built up each lesson. Overall, students achieve well in food technology and textiles but some underachieve in resistant materials because they do not undertake work using a wide enough range of materials and processes.
120. Standards on GCSE courses vary and mirror those found in Years 7 to 9. In food and textiles, students achieve well because assignments systematically extend their designing, making and evaluative skills. In graphics, standards and achievements vary between classes. In resistant materials the range of materials and processes used is again limited and students are not provided with sufficiently challenging design opportunities. This leads to some underachievement.

Teaching and learning

121. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. In the lessons observed it ranged between very good and unsatisfactory with considerable variation between subjects. Teaching is consistently good or very good in food and textiles. Expectations are high and teachers ensure that students have appropriate design specifications at the start of projects and that they carefully evaluate design requirements throughout each assignment. In graphics the quality of teaching varies considerably between classes. Teaching in resistant materials is just satisfactory, as lessons are not structured

carefully enough to extend fully the thinking of the highest-attainers or provide sufficient support for students with special educational needs.

122. A particular strength in teaching is teachers' use of assessment. In lessons they consistently highlight what students have to do to improve their work. Marking is thorough and linked very well to the National Curriculum and examination criteria. Good use is made of both self and peer-assessment to develop students' evaluative skills. Relationships in lessons are good and support students' learning well. In lessons where teaching is not as effective, teachers make insufficient use of a range of resources to stimulate students' thinking and at times the pace is slow and time is not used effectively.

Leadership and management

123. The leadership of the department is committed to raising standards. Steps have been taken to improve examination results, particularly those of boys and to promote higher standards. For example, by reviewing and amending schemes of work and introducing a vocational engineering course. The department has very good documentation that supports teachers well.
124. The department has worked hard to improve accommodation and resources. However, the problems associated with accommodation and a lack of resources, particularly in ICT, identified in the last report remain. Some rooms are stimulating learning environments whilst others such as the resistant materials rooms have old equipment and furniture. The department overall, lacks sufficient storage space. The lack of appropriate ICT resources for computer-aided design and manufacture means that all aspects of the National Curriculum cannot be covered and this limits the potential for students to gain the highest grades at GCSE. Progress since the last inspection is therefore unsatisfactory, overall.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory	
Management	Unsatisfactory	
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are not high enough and significant numbers of students do not achieve their potential
- Effective learning is characterised by teachers' good time management, high expectations and clearly expressed learning objectives
- The single, 50 minute lessons and large groups limit students' achievement
- Relationships between students and teachers are good and students have good attitudes
- Standards since the last inspection have fallen and improvement plans have been poorly managed
- The use of ICT does not meet legal requirements

Commentary

Examination results

125. Teacher Assessments in 2003 showed standards at the end of Year 9 to be well below expected levels for students' ages. Performance by girls was better than for boys, as is the case nationally. Results in GCSE examinations have fallen from being well above average at the last inspection to well below average in 2003. Although results improved in 2004, they remained well below average with few students gaining the higher grades. Until recently only small numbers opted for the subject, but more recently the numbers have increased. The standards achieved across the school generally do not reflect the standards students achieve in their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

126. The progress made by students is variable and dependent on the expertise of the teacher and the quality of lesson planning. In some classes achievement is good, reflected in the good teaching and characterised by teachers' high expectations, very effective planning of available time and good behaviour management. The pace is brisk, helped by time deadlines and sharply focused questioning. In a Year 10 class these strategies, together with effective differentiation, enabled students to make informed decisions about the quality and direction of their work and led to very good achievement. Achievement is unsatisfactory over the longer term for significant numbers of students. Work in sketchbooks and portfolios is often poorly presented and there is too much incomplete, copied or downloaded information that students do not understand. The low level of challenge and teacher-directed activities, exemplified in the scheme of work, mean that many potentially higher-attaining students do not demonstrate the standards of which they are capable. Homework is not well planned - to reinforce and consolidate learning - and matched to students' individual learning needs. By the end of Year 9 too many students have not acquired the knowledge and necessary skills to be confident, independent learners and many of those who choose to take a GCSE course are not prepared for the rigors of an examination course. Achievements related to ICT are underdeveloped and there is limited access to suitable equipment and software. Requirements for ICT in the curriculum are not met. Groups of over 30 students, 50 or 45 minute lessons, (cut shorter by time it takes for students to change rooms) coupled with weaknesses of curriculum structure and planning all contribute to unsatisfactory achievement despite the satisfactory quality of teaching.

Teaching and learning

127. The very large groups and students' boisterous behaviour are well managed by teachers. Other strengths are teachers' command of the subject and the positive relationships that underpin communications. Where feedback is closely linked to learning objectives and rooted in high expectations of effort and work-rate, productivity and learning are good. At its most effective questioning enables students to make reflective and evaluative comments and points-up clear areas for improvement. However the use of assessment is unsatisfactory overall. Teachers do not use it consistently to plan work and monitor progress alongside expected standards. In examination classes, use and understanding of marking criteria provides a clearer structure for reviewing achievement and setting targets.

Leadership and management

128. There is a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and a strong desire on the part of staff to tackle underperformance. Whilst there are signs of improvement in some areas, the actions and outcomes have not been coherently planned and rigorously

evaluated. Good practice, in the school and department, has not been shared as part of a school-wide programme of improvement. Progress since the last inspection has been poorly managed. Standards have fallen and the use of computers remains a weakness, with limited opportunities for students to explore their creative potential for image manipulation.

Music

Provision in music is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have improved provision since the last inspection
- Effective use of music technology supports learning
- The subject makes a good contribution to the students' personal development
- Some unsatisfactory teaching is a barrier to learning and further achievement
- Unsatisfactory accommodation arrangements do not support teaching and learning, and significantly limit enrichment opportunities
- Not all students are well matched to the demands of the course at GCSE level

Commentary

Examination results

129. Teacher Assessment results at the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory achievement. Students develop performance skills both in individual and ensemble playing and basic musical skills are embedded satisfactorily. A growing number of students follow the GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. Results in this course were above average in 2003 but showed a slight dip in 2004.

Standards and achievement

130. Standards for students currently in Year 11 are average and they are achieving well given their starting points. Students give sensitive performances of original and classic pieces, indicating a sound grasp of technique. A number of weaker students are choosing this subject, but they struggle to meet the course demands because they are less secure in the higher skills of sight-reading and composition. Class and ensemble playing makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, social and cultural education. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good with no variation in the achievement between boys and girls and for those students with special educational needs.

Teaching and learning

131. The teaching of music is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory overall. Some unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Where teaching is good it is characterised by careful planning, a sprightly pace, and high expectation to which students respond with good creative and intellectual effort. Teaching strategies that include engaging starter activities, helpful musical examples, and the opportunity to assess both their own and others' performance really help students learn well. Literacy skills are encouraged by the consistent use of music terminology. Where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 7 to 9, lessons are not clearly thought through or paced, activities lack challenge, and poor classroom control leads to disruptive behaviour, which is a barrier to learning. As a result those students do not achieve as well as they could. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 makes good use of music technology to support the development of composition skills. Access for all students is widening rapidly through the purchase of appropriate programmes. This enables students of all abilities to improvise, compose and perform to a satisfactory standard.
132. The use of assessment in lessons to guide students in their work is good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Although detailed records of students' progress are now being kept, this information is not used well enough yet in Year 9 to extend learning and this area has already been identified for further improvement.

Leadership and management

133. The department's musical leadership is good with a clear vision for future developments. Management is good and has successfully transformed what was an unsatisfactory department at the last inspection. Areas of unsatisfactory teaching have been identified, but support for improvement through lesson observation, more effective intervention, and

the close sharing of resources, are significantly hampered by the distance between the two music classrooms. Accommodation for peripatetic teachers is minimal, with the result that a growing number of students wishing to learn a musical instrument are prevented from doing so. This is reflected in lower than average participation in extra-curricular music, although the department makes a positive contribution to the life of the school in assemblies and concerts.

134. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Attainment levels in Year 9 and GCSE results have risen significantly, thanks to better teaching and learning. The use of information technology is now a regular feature of lessons at GCSE level and in the A level music course. Unsatisfactory accommodation, which was identified as an issue in the last inspection, has not been addressed, and remains a barrier to more effective teaching, learning and achievement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE are well above average
- Teaching is good, overall, and consequently, students achieve well
- Students display very good attitudes and behaviour in lessons
- The department is very well led and well managed
- Teaching is sometimes too instructional and does not enable students to be fully involved in a minority of lessons

Commentary

Examination results

135. Teacher Assessments results in 2003 were in line with the national average. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were well above the national average, although the proportion of students who gained A* and A grades was below average. Boys' performance is very high compared to the national average. The 2004 results were slightly lower than in 2003 although they remained high.

Standards and achievement

136. Students enter the school with varied experiences and, although they have good skills in some activities, overall standards are below average. By the end of Year 9 standards are average, showing that the students have achieved well and made good gains in skills and knowledge. For example, boys in Year 8 make very good progress in badminton, using their improving tactical knowledge to outwit their opponent. Girls in Year 9 netball show above average passing skills, which they apply very well in games.
137. Students, including those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is very good in GCSE classes and standards are above average. Students have good knowledge of anatomy and physiology and the impact that leadership qualities have on sporting performance. Practical standards in Year 10 GCSE basketball are below average, but few

students will use the activity as a focus sport. Standards in core activities are above average and individuals and teams gain good success in local and regional competitions.

Teaching and learning

138. Teaching and learning are good, overall, with some very good features, especially in GCSE lessons. A very good range of imaginative and challenging tasks in a Year 9 netball lesson enabled the students to learn extremely effectively. Teachers are very experienced, in the main, and have very good command of the subject. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and progressive tasks that enable students to acquire new skills and knowledge. Students are very well managed and, as a result, stay on task and display very good attitudes and behaviour and good physical efforts. In more effective lessons, students are given very good opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of others in order to suggest improvement. However, teaching in a minority of lessons is too instructional. Consequently, students are not sufficiently involved in providing ideas, leading warm-ups or answering challenging questions that deepen their understanding.

Leadership and management

139. Leadership is very good and the department is well managed. There is a good knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and a very clear vision for future development, focused on improving students' achievement. Systems to monitor students' progress are good and examination results are analysed very thoroughly. However, more consistent monitoring of their evaluative skills and health-related knowledge is lacking. The team of teachers work very effectively together and have produced a very thorough scheme of work. Overall, time for the subject is generous, but the single lessons are too short for practical activities, as they don't allow lessons to develop fully. Students have good opportunity to extend their skills in a good range of extra-curricular activities. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have been maintained and there are plans to improve the indoor accommodation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards seen	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective support from the school's senior management team is contributing to the development of citizenship
- Cross-curricular teaching and the citizenship week contribute to student achievement
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning across the curriculum are not fully developed

Commentary

Standards and achievement

140. On entry, Year 7 students have average skills in understanding about being an informed citizen. They develop skills of enquiry through research into disabilities and through knowledge of new

countries in the European Community as well as wider world issues such as the effects of the rain forests.

141. As students progress through Years 7 to 9 they make good progress in understanding about conflict and how to respond to issues. They develop empathy and the ability to use their imagination to make informed responses to situations not yet experienced. A Year 11 drama group acting a scene for Year 8 students helped the younger students understand how parents react to teenage problems.

Teaching and learning

142. In Years 7 and 8 students learn about citizenship through a range of stimulating activities. During citizenship week, students learn about the role of central and local government. Students in Years 10 and 11 are taught to discuss democracy issues and how people vote in different parts of the world. Teaching encourages a range of views and students learn to be respectful of each other. Students have good attitudes towards each other and respect individual views. Citizenship is taught in a number of curriculum areas. In history in Years 7 to 9 students are taught about the history of the political system and how this affects modern day society and in geography students learn about environmental issues, ecosystems and the effects of global warming. Science teaches about renewable resources and modern languages contribute through their study of European countries and their relevance to British society. In Years 10 and 11 students are taught how to analyse environmental issues through data interpretation and how to use the Internet to research coastal erosion and how this affects people's lives. Drama makes a good contribution in all years through role play. Students in drama in Years 10 and 11, learn how to be responsible citizens by producing sketches to help younger students to understand how to resolve conflict. In design and technology students learn about global issues concerning fair trade. Assemblies provide an opportunity for students to learn about world cultures connected to our multicultural society. Students participate in fund raising for the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and through sponsored activities for local and national charities.

Leadership and management

143. The co-ordinator has successfully tackled issues concerning the introduction of citizenship. With the full support of the school's senior management there has been a full audit of all subjects. The co-ordinator has provided training for all staff and has developed a variety of resources to cover all aspects of the programme. Each year parents receive a progress report containing an assessment against National Curriculum criteria.
144. All students are developing their citizenship through membership of the new school council. They are beginning to value being part of a decision-making process because their voice is starting to be heard. As this develops students will further understand democratic principles. Although the school is making good progress in teaching citizenship across subjects, not all contribute to its development. Citizenship is a central part of the school development plan and a key issue is to target cross-curricular teaching to improve the quality of provision.

VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS IN YEARS 10 AND 11

Provision for vocational subjects is good.

Main strengths

- Teachers' good subject knowledge enables students to learn new skills and knowledge
- Courses are well-planned and enable a wide range of students to achieve well

Commentary

145. The school offers a good range of vocational GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11. Engineering, leisure and tourism, health and social care and business studies were sampled during the inspection.
146. Standards seen in lessons are varied as classes include students who are predicted to achieve the full range of A-G grades. Overall standards are above average in health and social care and business studies, average in leisure and tourism but are below average in engineering. However, for many students this represents good achievement. Achievement in engineering is satisfactory.
147. Teaching is good, overall. In the most effective lessons, teachers have very good command of the subject, which ensures that students learn new skills and knowledge. In health and social care, students learn effectively about factors which affect health and well-being. Very good use of grade criteria ensures that students know what to do to improve. Very good use of ICT in leisure and tourism keeps students well motivated so that they can research about national parks. Students are well managed in most lessons and, consequently, display good attitudes and behaviour. When learning is satisfactory rather than good, as in engineering and business studies, it is because teacher explanations are limited, students chatter too much or questions are superficial and don't give sufficient opportunity for students to explain in depth.
148. Management of the courses is good as subjects are well planned and organised.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003, which is the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	10	40.0	80.1	0.0	23.1	16	29.9
Biology	15	73.0	65.2	20.0	11.1	30.7	20.6
Business Studies	44	81.8	76.4	25.0	16.3	31.8	26.2
Chemistry	7	71.4	2.7	0.0	13.9	31.4	24.1
Drama	17	100.0	86.5	35.3	19.6	37.6	30.6
English/ English Language	37	100.0	82.9	45.9	17.5	43.5	28.7
French	5	60.0	78.2	0.0	18.9	20.0	27.6
Design and Technology	18	88.9	74.9	16.7	11.1	32.8	25.3
Geography	10	90.0	74.3	40.0	19.8	38.0	26.5
German	5	60.0	81.5	0.0	19.3	18.0	28.9
History	10	90.0	80.7	20.0	19.5	37.0	28.6
Information Technology	38	57.9	67.0	0.0	10.9	19.2	21.4
Mathematics	17	58.8	61.9	17.6	17.1	27.1	22.1
Other Social Studies	36	83.3	69.7	19.4	16.7	32.2	24.1
Physics	11	36.4	68.6	9.0	14.4	20.9	22.7
Sports/ PE Studies	9	77.8	73.2	11.1	11.4	27.8	23.1

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	4	75.0	98.6	0.0	50.2	55.0	87.5
Biology	3	100.0	96.4	33.3	39.2	86.7	78.6
Business Studies	25	100.0	98.7	8.0	36.8	70.0	80.1
Chemistry	1	100.0	97.6	100.0	49.0	120.0	84.9
Drama	11	100.0	99.5	27.3	40.1	78.2	83.6
English Literature	29	100.0	99.5	31.0	46.5	82.1	86.5
French	1	100.0	98.8	0.0	51.5	40.0	87.6
Design and Technology	13	100.0	97.8	38.5	35.0	76.9	77.9
Geography	7	57.1	98.7	0.0	44.5	42.9	84.0
History	5	100.0	99.0	40.0	44.6	96.0	84.6
Information Technology	13	76.9	95.6	0.0	24.6	46.2	69.5

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	100.0	96.7	33.3	55.6	60.0	88.8
Other languages	2	100.0	98.8	0.0	38.9	60.0	81.1
Other Social Studies	28	96.4	97.4	21.4	42.7	70.0	81.8
Physics	3	100.0	96.7	00.0	44.6	60.0	81.7
Sports/ PE Studies	9	100.0	98.0	33.3	30.9	75.6	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The school provides courses in communications studies and in English literature. English literature was inspected in detail. Results in communication studies in 2003 at AS level were average. The subject was not sampled.

English literature

Provision in English literature is good.

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide a good structure for students' learning
- Relationships are good and students respond well to tasks set
- Support for independent teaming and thinking skills are not sufficiently embedded in lesson plans

Commentary

Examination results

149. In 2003, results at AS were well above the national average. At A2 they were in line with national levels and on target for individual students. There was a dip in 2004 at AS level. This was mainly the result of staffing problems which have now been resolved.

Standards and Achievement

150. Standards seen suggest that students are working to their individual targets. However, very few are working at the highest level. In Year 12, standards reflect the range of student attainment on entry to the sixth form and are satisfactory. About half continue to A2 where standards are above the national average, representing satisfactory progress over time.
151. Achievement in lessons is good. Students respond well to texts both in discussion and structured writing tasks. Relationships are good, with mutual respect between teachers and students and with cooperation and mutual support between students. This creates a climate in which students feel able to offer opinions and develop arguments. Their analytical skill is developed over time so that by Year 13 they are able to penetrate deeper levels of thinking and analysis.

Teaching and Learning

152. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are knowledgeable, diligent and well organised. Planning for progression is careful and provides students with the structured support that they need to gain A level passes. At times, however, the approach is too rigid and opportunities for more creative thought and discussion are lost. The most able students cope easily within a structured approach and do not necessarily find their own motivation to push for the higher levels. Student attitudes are positive but they feel anxious about the transition from GCSE to A level work. Recently the department has introduced thinking skills into sixth form teaching. This is good practice and is providing systematic extension of opportunities for creative thinking in English.

Leadership and Management

153. Leadership and management are satisfactory and gaining in effectiveness. The new team is reviewing current arrangements and introducing changes which will benefit individual students and help them to reach higher levels of attainment. The use of ICT is satisfactory. Overall progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

154. Provision is satisfactory overall, with good contributions from English and Drama. Some subjects, like history and art and design provide opportunities for thinking through ideas in discussion and drawing on wider reading, but analytical thinking needs to be promoted. The recent study skills day provided a good framework for learning across all subjects in teaching students techniques which support the development of language skills.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is good.

Standards seen	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have positive attitudes and are well prepared to start the AS and A2 level courses
- Marking is detailed, closely related to exam requirements and helpful to the students
- Teaching is heavily teacher led and is effective but does not always provide students with an insight into the higher-order mathematical skills needed for the top grades

Examination results

155. Results in AS and A level, in 2003, were close to the national average although they were relatively weaker at the top grades A and B. In 2004, the results at AS level have improved.

Standards and achievement

156. Students starting the courses usually have a GCSE grade A* to B, although a significant proportion start with a grade B. Some have only done the intermediate GCSE paper although this is unusual. Standards are average and achievement satisfactory at both AS and A level. Students in Year 12 are developing algebraic skills essential for the successful

completion of the course. Students in Year 13 had a thorough knowledge of the basic work in vectors and were able to move on to the next module.

Teaching and learning

157. Teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and the overall quality of teaching is good. Relationships between teachers and students are good and students appreciate the support and guidance given to them. Work is well marked, related to exam requirements and gives good guidance to students on how to improve.
158. Sometimes, the teaching approaches do not give the higher-attaining students more time to reflect on answers and gain the more advanced mathematical knowledge required for success at the highest levels. For example, a good lesson on differentiation, which had previously involved a relevant and imaginative investigation, enabled students to discover and then apply the 'rules' to simple polynomial expressions. It did not however, include discussion of why these rules could not work for all values in cases of discontinuous functions.

Leadership and management

159. The department is well organised and teachers form an effective team. Students are well prepared for the course and have a clear understanding of the difference between A level studies and GCSE. Overall, leadership and management are good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

160. Students make use of their mathematical skills in a number of subject areas. They were using the idea of population pyramids in geography which included the analysis of data. Numerical skills are also well used in business education, for example in calculating cash flows representing real income/expenditure situations. Overall, the students' mathematical skills are satisfactory.

SCIENCE

161. The focus of the inspection was biology. In addition, one lesson each of chemistry and physics was sampled. In both lessons, teachers were knowledgeable and effective. The physics lesson was in Year 12 and was well taught by a teacher who provided good support and guidance, carefully explaining difficult ideas and helping students to learn effectively. Chemistry was sampled in Year 12. Very good relationships enabled students to secure good learning and they were making satisfactory progress.

Biology

Provision in biology is good.

Standards seen	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Good teaching with some very good aspects
- Very good teacher knowledge and understanding of the subject
- Very good relationships and student attitudes to the subject

Commentary

Examination results

162. In 2003 results in A level met national expectations. Analysis of results at AS and A level indicates that value added meets expectations. There was no difference in the performance of boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

163. Standards vary. In the genetics of sex linkage they are currently below average, but are being targeted well. In mathematical aspects, and in completed modules, standards meet expectations, for example in numerical work on ecology. There are many good examples of practical work, with associated theory. This is a feature of the practical examination in the course on offer and leads to a good curriculum. Students are allowed on to the course with lower attainment than average (such as Foundation level C grades) and through a combination of very positive attitudes to the subject, good attitudes to work and very good teacher care and guidance, they achieve well. This has contributed to rising student numbers in the 3 year groups since the 2003 A level results.

Teaching and Learning

164. Teaching and learning are good overall. There are examples of very good practice. These include very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They also include very strong assessment with clear and detailed marking and good information to the students about areas of weakness and how to address them. This was seen to lead to good learning in the genetics module. The students' overall rating of their teaching was very positive. The practical dimension of the work was one of the strongest features but there were others, such as a conscious attempt to link the subject with awareness of current biological events and their ethical background. Students made good use of ICT in their analysis of investigative work and in information collection. They are developing good laboratory skills, for example in slide preparation. Students recognised the important role of their own participation in lessons and regarded the active dialogue with their teachers as one of the strong points of the subject.

Leadership and management

165. Leadership and management are good. Biology is one of the more successful A level subjects. Curriculum is good and the departmental leadership provides very good role models. Staffing is very good overall for teachers and technicians. Resources are satisfactory, with better texts available than in pre-16, although the library is insufficiently developed and not all staff are made aware of equipment available. The subject is normally well served by technicians, but teachers made special efforts to keep up a good level of sophisticated practical work even during a period of technician illness. Inclusion is good: entry to the science sixth form is open and good achievement is shown at all attainment levels. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory.

Standards seen	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In the best lessons, knowledgeable teachers provide good explanations and guidance
- Students find the feedback that they get from teachers helpful
- Not all students show good attitudes and teaching is not always demanding enough in requiring these

Commentary

Examination results

166. A level results in Year 13 were well below average in 2003. No student secured an A or B grade, although all achieved at least E. In 2004 results were similar, although not all students gained A to E grades. A large group entered for AS level at the end of Year 12. Two thirds of this group have gained grades between A and E.

Standards and achievement

167. The lack of an opportunity to study the subject in depth by taking a specialised examination course such as GCSE in Years 10 and 11 has a significant impact upon the standards on entry to the sixth form course. These are well below those expected for A level students. Although most students achieve satisfactorily, Year 13 standards are also well below average. Many students have difficulty in finding solutions to problems, because they do not have the previous knowledge to analyse independently or discuss the problem. A significant minority of students find it difficult to maintain their attention and this sometimes reduces their achievement.

Teaching and Learning

168. Teaching is satisfactory overall with some shortcomings. In the best lessons, clear explanations of tasks and demonstrations of techniques ensure that students know what they have to do and the best methods to use. Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding is often used to give students useful guidance on how to meet examination and coursework criteria in carrying out tasks. Students are appreciative of the way in which marking and spoken feedback from teachers helps them to improve their work. Teachers usually succeed in creating a relaxed working atmosphere. In some lessons however, this leads to an acceptance of lower levels of concentration and effort from some students than is normal in sixth form classes. This shows itself for example in a casual attitude to arriving on time, or failing to pay attention when work is being explained. This sometimes leads to achievement that is less than satisfactory for a few students. Teachers seek to help students to improve their capability for independent work by planning opportunities to work together in small groups. This does not always work as well as intended though, when students are not clear about what they have to do, or groups are too large for all to be able to play a useful part.

Leadership and management

169. Day-to-day management is satisfactory. Leadership is unsatisfactory because it has not been successful in maintaining the strengths in achievement, teaching and learning, identified by the last inspection, or in improving the examination results.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

170. When computers are used in other subjects, standards are at expected levels for students not following a specialist ICT course. Among the focus subjects, opportunities to use computers are best in business education and drama. Overall use is, however, unsatisfactory, because of insufficient opportunities in English, mathematics and design technology.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focus was on geography but both history and law were sampled. Standards were average and the overall quality of teaching satisfactory in history. In some lessons there was little challenge and the lessons were rather heavily teacher directed with over reliance on the teacher. Students made better progress in the lessons where the teacher allowed students to use their initiative. Although teaching was satisfactory in the observed lesson in law, there was little opportunity for students to show initiative in their learning. Standards were, however, satisfactory and relationships good.

Geography

Provision in geography is good.

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Good

Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- At the end of Year 13 students achieve well because their interest and motivation are excellent and they are taught well
- Students do not have enough opportunities for students to think for themselves
- The curriculum is stimulating and well planned, with fieldwork making a very good contribution
- Students' work is marked regularly, but assessment does not always clearly inform students about how well they are doing and how to improve
- The subject is led and managed well

Commentary

Examination results

171. The school results at AS level in 2003 were above average but at A level they were well below average. In 2004, there has been a significant improvement in the results at A level.

Standards and achievement

172. The standards attained by Year 13 students, are above average. Students all achieve well because they are interested and stimulated by the lessons and they are taught well. Although students join the sixth form with good levels of knowledge and understanding, their ability to think and ask questions for themselves and make links between different themes and locations is more limited.

Teaching and Learning

173. Teaching and learning are good, some is very good, because teachers know the subject very well and they have consistently high expectations for the level of work required. The students' experience of fieldwork makes a very good contribution to helping them understand and remember what they have learned. Nevertheless there is some inconsistency in the teaching of skills. In the better lessons, the teacher used a very good range of methods to help students develop more complex thinking. For example, in a Year 13 lesson about coastal regions and their effects on people, the teacher used questions and map work to help students begin to consider the hazards and benefits of a coastal area. This was carefully developed to ensure that students were thinking about the benefits and effects at a range of scales and in different contexts, using not only prior learning, but also a range of sources. This was further extended for the higher-attaining students through the judicious use of higher-order questions towards the close of the lesson. The lesson successfully moved students from a position of dependency to one of thinking for themselves.
174. Teachers mark and assess students' work regularly and assessment is generally satisfactory. However, there are variations between teachers, so at its best there are clear detailed comments about how well students are doing and what they need to do next, but in other work, marking is less detailed and specific. Students do not generally have clear and precise targets and consequently while they are broadly clear about how well they are doing, their knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and how to improve are less well developed.
175. The curriculum is broad and well planned, giving a good range of theory and case studies. However, there is some variation in the way lessons are planned by different teachers with the consequence that links, for example between map work, physical and human geography, are made more effectively in some lessons than in others. Students make good use of their numeracy skills to analyse and interpret data, but the use of ICT is more limited.

Leadership and management

176. The subject is led and managed well. There is very clear vision for the development of the department and a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The subject has improved well since the last inspection, so students' achievement continues to improve. Although resources are satisfactory, and map work and visual material are used well, there are missed opportunities because the range of resources and the opportunities to use ICT within geography classrooms are too limited.

ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

177. Design and technology (product design) was sampled. Teaching and learning were good and students achieved well although the sharing of the work by two teachers results in some lessons and student learning being less effective. Students receive good individual guidance and teachers have good subject knowledge, which is used effectively to promote students' learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

178. Art, drama and theatre studies were inspected in full and music was sampled. Teaching and student achievement in music were at least good and examples of excellent practice were observed. Students were given challenging work which was well directed by the teacher so that students were successfully able to use their own initiative to work out answers. Overall, student standards in music were at least average.

Drama

Provision in drama is very good.

Standards seen	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very Good
Management	Very Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teacher expectations are high and lessons well planned
- Teaching and learning in practical lessons are excellent
- Written work is weaker than practical work
- Assessment strategies are very good

Commentary

Examination results

179. Results at AS level reflect the range of students' prior attainment. They generally meet and exceed their individual targets. Overall AS results are above national averages. At A2 results are average.

Standards and Achievement

180. Standards seen demonstrated some very high levels in practical work and generally satisfactory attainment in the written elements of the course. Students' make good progress over time, with those in Year 13 demonstrating an impressive maturity of response and judgement, together with well-developed teamworking skills. Achievement is good. Students are able to build on their knowledge and skills because teachers provide a structured approach and are uncompromising in their demands for high standards of commitment and application.

Teaching and Learning

181. Teaching and learning are good, overall, and in practical lessons (performance and preparation for performance) are excellent. Teaching is challenging, well planned and detailed and responsive to individual needs. The use of assessment is a particular strength. Students are actively involved in the learning process. They are aware of what they need to do to improve and are taught to evaluate their own and others' work. The same approach

is being used within the written components of the course, but there is a gap between students' understanding of what they must do and how to do it to the highest standards. Students are positive and enthusiastic, especially about the practical elements of the course, and their enthusiasm shows in their performance.

Leadership and Management

182. Leadership and management are very good. The strengths of the department have been built up over time with meticulous attention to detail and good response to changing needs. There is a vision and purpose in the department. High ambition for the subject is reflected not only in the quality of sixth form provision, but also in the way students are prepared for post-16 study in the main school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is unsatisfactory.

Standards seen	Below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A significant proportion of students do not achieve their potential
- Some teaching lacks intellectual challenge
- Links with a local college and trips to an international study centre make a positive contribution to students' achievements

Commentary

Examination results

183. The 2003 results show students' average point score to be well below the national average. Standards have fallen significantly since the last inspection and numbers recruited are very low. A small number of students goes onto art and design courses in higher educational establishments.

Standards and achievement

184. In current classes, of the few students who have continued to study the subject, most are working at below average standards. As in previous years, a significant proportion of students begin the course with average GCSE results, but in addition there are others whose prior attainment is very low and who last studied the subject in Year 9. A minority achieve well from these very low starting points but most achieve less well than in their other subjects. Year 12 students have a lot of catching up to do but the course is not planned in ways that reflect the students' differing needs and experiences. In the 2004 AS results, many students achieved very low grades. Those whose work journals and sketchbooks contain explanations, ideas and thought processes, often lack the depth and levels of intellectual understanding expected at this level.

Teaching and learning

185. Teachers share a love of the subject and their subject expertise motivates students. However, much of the teaching lacks challenge and intellectual rigor and is therefore unsatisfactory. There is insufficient structure to long and short term plans and therefore students have too little information about the order and sequence of work. In the lessons seen this resulted in lost opportunities for independent study and at times poor use of the actual lesson time. Some tasks, like visits to exhibitions, reading and research and preparation of canvases, if identified and completed ahead of lessons would have given added impact to the teaching and strengthened achievement. Too few opportunities are created for students to learn to speak confidently and authoritatively about artists' and designers' work as a means of testing out and sharing ideas. Students would benefit from more opportunities to practise these skills.

Leadership and management

186. The range and breadth of the curriculum is enriched by extra-curricular visits to national galleries and study trips to Paris. Year 13 students gain significantly from taking a life-drawing class at a nearby college. They feel it has given them increased confidence and improved drawing skills that place them in a stronger position to gain places on art and design courses at their chosen university. These opportunities contribute positively to spiritual, social and cultural development. Curriculum planning and assessment, and arrangements for tracking and monitoring students' progress are

unsatisfactory and result in overall unsatisfactory leadership and management. There has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.

HOPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE and TRAVEL

The school provides a course in health and social care to GNVQ level, and an A level course in physical education. Both subjects were sampled. Students work hard in health and social care and are well motivated by the teachers. Teaching is at least satisfactory but was sometimes heavily teacher-directed and provided little opportunity for students to pursue their own initiative. Standards were satisfactory, overall. In the one physical education lesson in Year 13, teaching provided sound support to motivate and encourage students.

BUSINESS

The school provides two courses. An AS and A2 course in Business Studies and a VCE course in Business.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is satisfactory.

Standards seen	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are broadly average. Students achieve better on vocational courses
- Teaching is good: teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and of the requirements of the examination syllabuses
- The subjects are well led by a new head of department who has clearly identified what the department must do to improve

Commentary

Examination results

187. The 2003 AS results were above the national average. The A2 results were below the national average especially for those gaining the higher A-B grades.

Standards and achievement

188. Standards in business subjects are satisfactory. The results in A level and AS Level were below average in 2003 whilst results in the VCE Business Course were good. Girls' achievement was well above that of boys on the A level course in 2003.

Teaching and Learning

189. Teaching is good. There are excellent relationships between teachers and students. Teachers are well informed with good subject knowledge and detail of examination requirements. Teaching is at its best when students are challenged, use real data and are required to think for themselves and evaluate their work. Some of the teaching, whilst generally competent and based on good subject knowledge and sound relationships with students, does not consolidate students' learning potential due to the lack of pace and a very rushed plenary session.

Leadership and management

190. The department offers a range of business courses in the sixth form to cater for the needs of all students. The new head of department has made a good start in identifying the causes of underachievement on some courses. The department has a strong commitment to improvement and to providing the best for students. Leadership and management are good. The analysis of the 2004 results is thoughtful and clear and the actions arising from it relevant. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

191. There was no focus subject in this area. A routine personal, social and health education session was sampled and the whole of the sixth form was also involved in a one day programme of 'study skills' delivered by an external organisation. The personal, social and health education session provided a satisfactory learning experience and was directed toward helping students identify preferred individual learning styles. Students were rather passive and the work was heavily teacher directed. This contrasted with the good study skills day where students in the whole of the sixth form spent the day looking at the nature of memory, and how to study and learn. Students reported that they enjoyed the day and it was well directed by the teachers who provided a range of positive learning opportunities. Overall, this was a good experience for the students.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	4	3
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	4	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	4	3
How well students learn	4	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	3	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	5	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	4	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).